

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 29, 2005

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Chairman
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Ranking Member
Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

As you know, the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program provides payments to local communities to compensate them for losses to their tax bases that result from the presence of significant amounts of federal land in their counties. These funds are critical to the budgets of local governments, which supply many essential services such as search and rescue, law enforcement, road maintenance and education.

In addition to the regular residents of our country's public land counties, millions of Americans who visit national parks, forests, and other public lands rely on county governments to provide high-quality services and a clean and safe environment. The PILT program makes this possible.

Unfortunately, the Department of the Interior's Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 budget request of \$200 million – \$27 million less than was appropriated for FY 2005 – reverses the positive trend over recent years of incremental increases, moving towards full funding. This places an undue financial hardship on our counties, who are mandated by law to provide many critical public services.

The current authorization level for the PILT program is \$311 million. As we work to achieve full funding for PILT, we urge the Committee to provide at least \$235 million for FY 2006. We look forward to working with you to support this important program.

Sincerely,



Jeff Bond

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Arlin Jech
(PILT Funding)

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